

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF FORMER
PUPILS OF THE CALIFORNIA SCHOOL
FOR THE BLIND

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of the

California School for the Blind

JOSEPHINE BUELL

THE aim of this study is to survey the employment status of former students of the California School for the Blind. To date, very little information on this subject is available from any school for the visually handicapped. It is reasonable to assume that a study of this type is needed as a planning guide for present and future blind pupils. A school can plan more intelligently when it has information regarding the success and failure of its former students in adult life.

Method and Sample

Names of individuals leaving the school each year were obtained from office files with the permission of the superintendent. Since these records have no follow-up data, most of the information on employment status of former pupils was obtained from the placement officer of the California School for the Blind. He comes into contact with these people through conventions and visits to their homes. Additional information was obtained from the superintendents of industrial workshops for the blind in California and from a hostess at a recreation center for the blind.

During the period 1927-51, 467 students, 16 years and older, left the California School for the Blind. Information was obtained on 358, or 76.7 percent, of these former pupils. The sample was well distributed over the 25-year period.

Employment Status of Former Pupils

About three-fourths of the former students of the school are gainfully employed. This includes house-

wives, workers in sheltered shops for the blind, vending-stand operators, and students preparing in college. Nearly one-fourth of the gainfully employed are working in subsidized occupations, such as industrial shops for the blind and in the vending-stand program.

Using this broad definition of employment, it is found that the blind are 15 percent below the national average for sighted people. Other studies¹ show that the average income of blind workers is much lower than that of gainfully employed sighted individuals. Of course, there are some prosperous blind people.

In comparison with sighted workers, there are in California more blind individuals in white collar occupations which includes selling in its various forms, such as vending-stands for the blind, door to door, and newspaper salesman. There are fewer blind in the skilled trades. The percentages for the two groups are about equal in the semi-skilled and unskilled occupations.

One-hundred and two, or 54 percent of the located former male pupils are employed in regular industry and by governmental branches. These are unsubsidized occupations. About 14 percent are employed in industrial workshops and about 8 percent are earning a living in the vending stand program. In other words, 22 percent of the males are found in subsidized occupations. This leaves 24 percent unemployed.

About 41 percent of the former female pupils become homemakers, and somewhat more than half of them marry sighted husbands. Nine percent work in sheltered shops while four percent are found in

• JOSEPHINE BUELL is a teacher at the California School for the Blind, Berkeley. This paper is a summary of a master's thesis accepted by San Francisco State College in 1956.

¹ Fitting, Edward, "Rehabilitation Status of Former Students of the Michigan School for the Blind," *New Outlook for the Blind*, January, 1955. p. 23.

eye. The need for parent education and an effectual follow-up system was indicated since less than two out of every five children were taken by alerted parents for a doctor's examination.

In an intensive study¹⁰ undertaken by the Social Science Research Center of Pennsylvania State University in 30 Pennsylvania communities the findings showed that of 915,000 children given medical examinations, 328,000 had remediable defects. The study revealed that the "present rate of correcting school children's medical and dental defects is far too low in all segments of society and all types of homes." Experiments on methods of follow-up indicated that the "corrective action rate" can be significantly raised. There are methods that work when responsibility for follow-up is assumed.

The promotion of conditions and services which foster mental health is another area of dire need where special education has demonstrated interest but might be counted on for greater initiation and support. The extent to which mental hygiene and child guidance facilities have permeated the public schools in the United States is reflected in a questionnaire study gleaned from a sampling of public school systems over the nation.¹¹ Administrators reported that on an average 10 percent of the school population were emotionally disturbed. The numbers of psychiatrists, psychiatric social workers, and psychologists available for service were inadequate in the judgment of the administrators. The number of specialists furthermore estimated as necessary by them were much below the number recommended by authorities. The numbers recommended by the latter for adequate service for school age children are as follows: one psychiatrist for 8000 children, one psychiatric social worker for 3000 children, and one psychologist for 2000 children. In the area of psychological service alone, the committee of the 1930 White House Conference recommended such service for school children at entrance. Yet, today, in too many school systems having special education, psychological service is available only for the over-age child who is regarded

to be mentally retarded because of abject failure in the regular program.

The nationwide interest in mental health and in programs at the state level as a result of the National Mental Health Act of 1946 is paving the way for greater recognition of mental health in school programs. Public understanding of the values of psychological service and social work counseling in the public schools is growing. As community Child Guidance Clinics are established in increasing numbers the school has need to better understand their function and how to use their services.

Preservice and inservice training in child growth and development and mental hygiene will become a "must" for every administrator and teacher. The school is only at the threshold of its opportunities in the field of mental health.¹²

What can be done now? Is there a School Health Council¹³ made up of administrators, teachers, health personnel, and agency representatives in your school system or your school? Has the Health Council looked at the total problem by facing the questions the National Committee on the school age child puts to the individual school-system?

These are:

1. "What are the *most important* health needs of our children today?" "How *many* have these needs?" "How *seriously* does the lack of help interfere with each child's education and development?"
2. "With our present know-how, which of these problems can be handled most *efficiently*?"
3. "Do we have—or can we get—the *resources* in money, personnel, and facilities to lick these problems?"
4. "How can we mobilize *support* to get our job done?"¹⁴

Is the special education representative alert to the preventive aspects that can be promoted through the School Health Council? Is special education

¹⁰ *Rx for Healthier Children*. New York: Health Information Foundation. 1955. 22 pages.

¹¹ David Abrahamsen, and others. "Status of Mental Hygiene and Child Guidance Facilities in Public Schools in the United States." *Journal of Pediatrics*. Vol. 46 (January, 1955) p. 107-118.

¹² *Mental Health in Modern Education. Part II*. 54th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1955.

¹³ National Education Association and American Medical Association. *School Health Services*. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1953. p. 384-91.

¹⁴ *Better Health for School Age Children*. Op. Cit. p. 3.

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vending stands. Unsubsidized occupations take care of approximately 21 percent of the former female pupils. Unemployed are about 25 percent of the girls leaving the California School for the Blind between 1927 and 1951.

OCCUPATIONS OF FORMER PUPILS OF THE CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

| Occupations | Number of Male Blind Workers | Occupations | Number of Female Blind Workers |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Unemployed | 35 | Unemployed | 36 |
| Industrial center | 26 | Housewife | 69 |
| Professions | 23 | Industrial center | 15 |
| Assembly work | 15 | Professions | 13 |
| Vending stand | 15 | Vending stand | 7 |
| Selling | 11 | Assembly work | 5 |
| Musician | 9 | Selling | 2 |
| Kitchen help | 7 | Dark room | 2 |
| Dark room | 5 | Self employed | 2 |
| Janitor | 5 | Beggar | 2 |
| Office clerk | 4 | Traveling companion | 1 |
| Piano tuner | 4 | Domestic | 1 |
| Self employed | 2 | Braille transcriber | 1 |
| Farming | 2 | Switch board operator | 1 |
| Gardener | 2 | Bird raiser | 1 |
| Truck driver * | 2 | Waitress | 1 |
| Messenger | 1 | Clerk | 1 |
| Upholsterer | 1 | Dance instructor | 1 |
| Quarry worker | 1 | Candy factory worker | 1 |
| Braille transcriber | 1 | | |
| Merchant marine * | 1 | Student | 7 |
| Catering business | 1 | | |
| Radio repair | 1 | | |
| Laundry worker | 1 | | |
| Tax consultant | 1 | | |
| Minister | 1 | | |
| Truck helper | 1 | | |
| Student | 11 | | |
| Total | 189 | Total | 169 |

* Former students whose sight improved.
NOTE—Dark room refers to development of x-ray film.

Summary and Comparisons

About two-thirds of the blind students entering college graduated. Somewhat more than half of the blind college graduates entered the professions. The figures compare favorably with the progress of sighted students in these areas. As in the case with sighted pupils, many former blind students become employed in other jobs than those which were goals upon graduation from high school or college.

Limited evidence indicates that the percentage of former students of the California School for the Blind who become gainfully employed compares

favorably with that of other schools and classes for the blind.

Less than half of the former pupils have gone into white collar pursuits. In 25 years, nine of the former pupils earned a living as musicians, and most of them worked in night clubs. Eight percent of the former pupils successfully entered the professions. Nine have succeeded as teachers, eight in social work, five in rehabilitation work, four in law, four as chiropractors, and three as music teachers with a private clientele.

Only a few have gone into piano tuning and farming. It would seem that these two fields offer more opportunities for the blind. California lags behind some states in the number of blind occupied in these occupations. On the other hand, a number of totally blind students in California became employed in the dark room of hospitals developing x-ray film, while some of the partially sighted have gone into kitchen work.

Begging by former students is practically non-existent. There are blind beggars in California, but they do not come from this school for the blind.

VOCATIONAL STATUS OF ACCOUNTED FOR FORMER PUPILS

| | Female | | Male | |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Employed | | | | |
| Unsubsidized occupations | 35 or | 20.7% | 102 or | 54% |
| Subsidized occupations | | | | |
| Industrial center | 15 or | 8.9% | 26 or | 13.8% |
| Vending stand | 7 or | 4.1% | 15 or | 7.9% |
| Housewife | 69 or | 40.8% | | |
| Unemployed * | 43 or | 25.5% | 46 or | 24.3% |
| Total | 169 or | 100% | 189 or | 100% |

* Includes college students because they are not now earning money. Most of them will become employed.

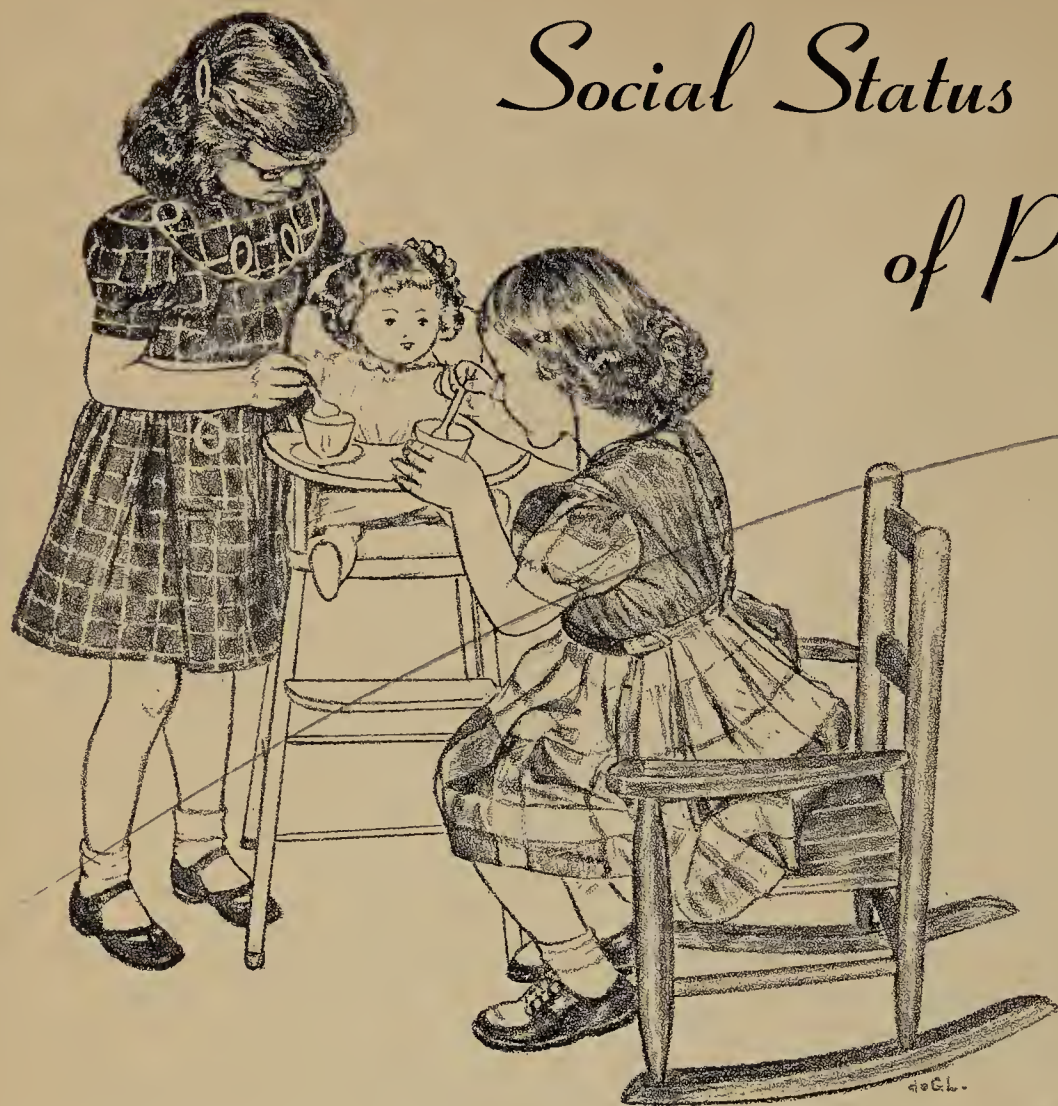
Conclusion

Although the income of blind workers is still far below the sighted in general, the economic position of the blind has improved a great deal in the last 15 to 20 years. Today there are many more jobs available for the blind. It would appear that about 75 percent of blind pupils become gainfully employed in one manner or another as adults.

Make plans to meet at the annual convention of ICEC in Pittsburgh, Pa., in April.

Social Status

of Physically Handicapped Children



DEWEY G. FORCE, JR.

EVIDENCE at the adult level suggests that handicapped individuals hold a minority status similar to that of various racial, religious, and national groups, but what is the social position of handicapped children among normal peers? With little real evidence a variety of assumptions have been defended vigorously. One often hears, "Normal children are so cruel!" Or, "The handicapped child is accepted just like anyone else." Just what are their social relationships? Since the social and psychological effects of disability often outweigh physical problems in importance, an attempt was made to investigate carefully this area of human behavior.

The study was designed to compare physically handicapped and normal children in integrated classes at the elementary school level in an effort to determine the effect of physical disability upon social position among peers.

Data for this study were obtained near the end

of the school year from situations in which physically handicapped and normal children were being educated together in the elementary grades as a matter of administrative policy. The physically handicapped children were regularly enrolled in these classes because the administrators and teachers felt they could benefit more from this kind of educational experience than from separation into special classes based on type of disability or treatment procedures. Subjects were 63 physically handicapped children and 361 normal children in 14 elementary classes from three Michigan schools providing special services for exceptional children. All of the physically handicapped children possessed normal intelligence. The sample included children from the first through the sixth grades. Types of disabilities represented may be seen in Table 2.

A near-sociometric instrument was administered which revealed choice behavior on three criteria—friends, playmates, and workmates. In addition, information was obtained from the cumulative educational and medical records of the physically handicapped subjects, and the teachers submitted two information sheets upon which all children could

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